

Melaleuca acacioides thicket at Cape Berthelot. It was initially identified and registered as a Little Bronze Cuckoo *Chrysococcyx minutillus* but was subsequently re-identified independently by Mr S.A. Parker (S.A. Museum) and us as *plagosus*.

Immature bronze-cuckoos are difficult to identify, especially in the field. Both *plagosus* and *minutillus* have black and white bars all along the outer rectrix but in *minutillus* the white bars are partly rufous. The crown and upper back in *plagosus* is more greyish, less greenish, than in *minutillus*. The wing of the specimen from Cape Berthelot (97 and 99 mm) is longer than for *minutillus* from the Kimberley (range 89-96 mm).

It seems strange that the specimen was being fed by Mangrove Warblers because this suggests that it was fledged in the Kimberley though young cuckoos uttering persistent begging calls sometimes stimulate birds other than their fosters to feed them. However a migrant individual would perhaps not solicit. The Mangrove Warbler is a common host of the Little Bronze Cuckoo in the Kimberley.

— JULIAN FORD and R.E. JOHNSTONE

Moths and caterpillars on *Chenopodium* at Perry Lakes. — On April 20, 1980 a junior naturalists excursion was held at Perry Lakes (31°56'S, 115°46'E), a freshwater lake 7.5 km west of Perth on the Swan Coastal Plain. It was decided to investigate the exposed sand banks on the western edge of the lake caused by the considerable drop in water level due to the successive drought years. The sandbanks carried an almost pure stand of *Chenopodium macrospermum* with some *Cyperus tenuiflorus*. Amongst these plants seedlings of Flooded Gum (*Eucalyptus rudis*) and Tamarisk (*Tamarix aphylla*) had established themselves.

Chenopodium macrospermum Hook. f. (Chenopodiaceae) is an introduced plant native to South America. In Western Australia it had been previously recorded from Lake Waneragup (15km SSE Bunbury) and Lake Bibra (16 km SSW Perth). *C. macrospermum* has a notable history as it was first collected by no less a naturalist than Charles Darwin during his voyage on HMS *Beagle*. It was subsequently collected and scientifically named by the eminent British botanist Joseph Hooker (later Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, England) in his *The Botany — The Antarctic Voyage of HM Discovery Ships Erebus and Terror in the years 1839-1843*. Hooker also recorded *C. macrospermum* as somewhat of a culinary delight:

"This very distinct species has been used as a pot-herb by the colonists of the Falkland Islands, and was described to me as excellent".

We did not have time to sample the plant's "culinary delights" but we did note that it was being heavily eaten by a species of caterpillar and that large swarms of a small silver moth and a small black spider resided amongst its foliage. Specimens of the moths, caterpillars and spiders were collected for identification.

The moth specimens were forwarded to Dr I.F.B. Common of the C.S.I.R.O. Division of Entomology who kindly provided the following reply:

"The specimens that were so abundant in the stand of *Chenopodium macrospermum* are *Hymenla recurvalis* (Fabricius), family Pyralidae, a widespread species in Australia and the Pacific Islands, but also from Africa, and India to China. It is also recorded from America. I have records in Australia of the larvae on *Amaranthus*, *Celosia* and *Trianthema portulacastrum*, and it is a pest of beetroot (foliage) and silver beet, when it is known as the beet webworm. Zimmerman in *Insects of Hawaii*, vol. 8 records the food plants as *Alternanthera sessilis*, amarantaceous weeds, *Batis maritima*, beets, chard, chenopodiaceous weeds, Chinese spinach, coxcomb, *Euxolus*, New Zealand spinach, *Nototrichium*, *Portulaca*, *Sesuvium portulacastrum* and spinach. There seems to be no doubt therefore that your specimens were using *Chenopodium* as a food plant".

The caterpillars were brought back to the laboratory along with samples of the *Chenopodium*. When collected the larvae varied in size from 2-3 cm and their colour ranged from green, cream, brown or black with black half-moon or



Fig. 1 — The Cluster Caterpillar *Spodoptera litura* (Fabricius): A larvae; B pupa; C emergent moth. Line scale = 1cm.

triangular shaped markings along their backs (Fig. 1A). The larvae continued to eat and grow, moving through a number of growth stages. On May 1, 1980 the largest of the caterpillars migrated to the floor of the container, where after spinning a few threads of silk, it pupated (Fig. 1B). The pupa is chestnut-brown in colour, shiny in appearance and about 2 cm long. By May 10 the remaining larvae had pupated. On May 19, 1980 the first adult moth emerged and by May 21 all moths had emerged. The moths have a wing span of about 4 cm. Their forewings are greyish-brown, patterned with whitish bands and streaks and there are blue-grey areas near the tip and base. The hind wings are pearly white with a thin brown line just inside the hind margin (Fig. 1C). A specimen of this moth was also forwarded to Dr Common who identified it as the Cluster Caterpillar (*Spodoptera litura* (Fabricius), family Noctuidae), a wide ranging species which is a serious insect pest of pasture, ornamental and native plants.

Voucher material of *Chenopodium macrospermum* (Kenneally 7189) has been lodged in the W.A. Herbarium and specimens of *Hymenia recurvalis* and *Spodoptera litura* with the National Insect Collection, Canberra.

I am grateful to Mr. Paul G. Wilson (Western Australian Herbarium) for identifying *Chenopodium macrospermum* and Dr I.F.B. Common (CSIRO) for his identifications and information on the moth specimens.

— K.F. KENNEALLY, Western Australian Herbarium.

A Red-back Spider attacking an Immature Dugite. — On February 22, 1980, at about 1015 hrs, a small snake was found entangled in the web of a Red-back Spider *Latrodectus mactans* beside a covered passageway at the CSIRO laboratory at Helena Valley (Fig. 1).

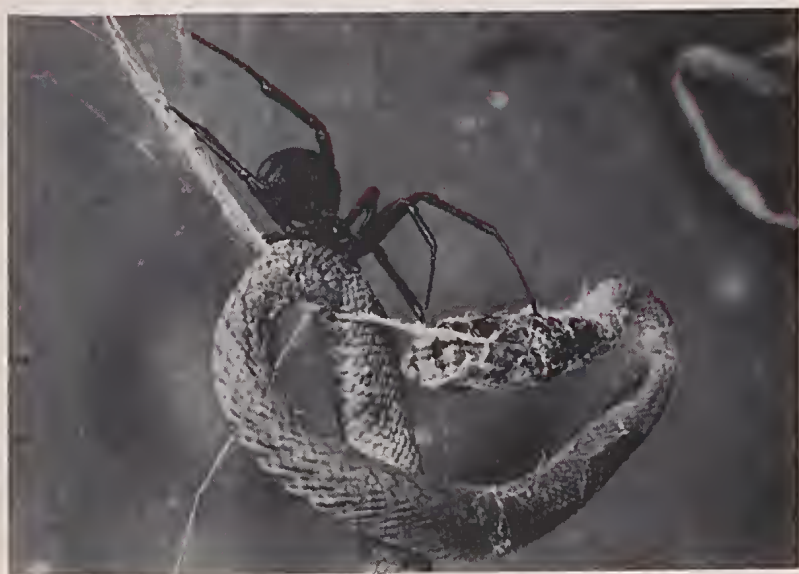


Fig. 1 — Dugite emeshed in the web of a Red-back Spider. Photo: A.G. Wells.